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BY

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At the November meeting, 1911 — thirty months since — it may by some be remembered I submitted a paper — "The Trent Affair; An Historical Retrospect" — which now appears in its proper place in our *Proceedings*. The episode then discussed was one of indisputable historical interest, and I was able to speak of it to a certain extent from personal recollection. What I now submit amounts to a sequel. I then had occasion to refer in some detail to the Confederate Commissioners arrested in transit by Capt. Wilkes — James M. Mason of Virginia, and John Slidell of Louisiana. I described their seizure, their subsequent detention at Fort Warren, their release, and, finally, their arrival at their original destinations in the two European capitals — London and Paris — there to represent the Confederacy.

The present narrative has in it not a few of the elements which enter into works of fiction; and, on behalf of the Confederacy, it was John Slidell who at that juncture arranged the diplomatic program about to be described. Such being the case, it is historically interesting, in view of what subsequently occurred, to recall the impression once made on his contemporaries by Mr. Slidell; for, so highly developed was his faculty of political management supposed to be, he was popularly regarded as little short of a magician. This impression was shared also by those exceptionally competent to form opinions on that head. For instance, in his publication, *My Diary, North and South*, W. H. Russell thus describes a social call at New Orleans, May 24, 1861, immediately after the fall of Fort Sumter. He says:

> In the evening I visited Mr. Slidell, whom I found at home with his family. . . . I rarely met a man whose features have a greater *finesse* and firmness of purpose than Mr. Slidell's; his keen grey

eye is full of life, his thin, firmly-set lips indicate resolution and passion. Mr. Slidell, though born in a Northern state, is perhaps one of the most determined disunionists in the Southern Confederacy; he is not a speaker of note, nor a ready stump orator, nor an able writer; but he is an excellent judge of mankind, adroit, persevering, and subtle, full of device, and fond of intrigue; one of those men, who, unknown almost to the outer world, organizes and sustains a faction, and exalts it into the position of a party — what is called here a "wire-puller." Mr. Slidell is to the South something greater than Mr. Thurlow Weed has been to his party in the North. . . . Mr. Slidell and the members of his family possess *naiveté*, good sense, and agreeable manners; and the regrets I heard expressed in Washington society, at their absence, had every justification.

This was written in May. Six months later Mr. Slidell emerged into world-wide notoriety, and Russell, then still sending his "Special Correspondent" letters to the *Times*, thus referred to him immediately after the *Trent* affair, the letter, written in Washington, appearing in the *Times* issue for December 10th:

Mr. Slidell, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in New Orleans, is a man of more tact and he is not inferior to his colleague, Mr. Mason, in other respects. He far excels him in subtlety and depth, and is one of the most consummate masters of political manœuvre in the States. He is what is here called a "wire-puller," — a man who unseen moves the puppets on the public stage as he lists — a man of iron will and strong passions, who loves the excitement of combinations, . . . and who in his dungeon [at Fort Warren], or whatever else it may be, would conspire with the mice against the cat sooner than not conspire at all. . . . Originally a northern man, he has thrown himself into the southern cause and staked his great fortune on the issue without hesitation, and with all the force of his intellect and character.

Commenting on the above, I thus expressed myself in the paper on the *Trent* affair:

Slidell, on the other hand, was considered one of the most astute and dangerous of all Confederate public characters. An intriguer by nature, unscrupulous in his political methods, he . . . was generally looked upon as the most dangerous person to the Union the Confederacy could select for diplomatic work in Europe. The first object of the envoys was to secure the recognition of the Confederacy.[1]

[1] *Proceedings*, XLV. 40.

In the present study my purpose is to describe, in the light of material to which access has since been obtained, the work done by this master of political management, this diplomatic magician, during the eight months immediately succeeding his arrival in Europe. The narrative, an extraordinary one, involves, as I shall show, the crisis of our Civil War. Well-designed, the scheme — plot, it cannot properly be termed — at one time seemed almost certain to prove a triumph of diplomatic art. In the event it failed, and failed utterly; but its failure was due to a combination of circumstances highly improbable of occurrence, and quite beyond the control of Mr. Slidell. Not long surviving the cause he had furthered, Mr. Slidell died in exile. No biography of him has since been published, and his papers, like those of his colleague in the Senate and Chief in the Confederate State Department during the Civil War, Judah P. Benjamin, have been destroyed. In his share in what then occurred, however, so far as the record survives, I find nothing provocative of censure, nothing which an opponent would be justified in stigmatizing as otherwise than in accordance with the accepted rules of the game. On this point my judgment is also worth something; as, first so to do, I have been privileged to read the confidential correspondence between him and Mr. Mason.

July, 1863, witnessed the Gettysburg struggle and the fall of Vicksburg. That month, consequently, is by general historical consent looked upon as marking the climax and turning-point of the War of Secession. Perhaps it did; but it may none the less fairly be questioned whether for sympathisers in the cause of the Union, the previous September did not furnish occasion for a deeper solicitude. In it the crisis became acute; and, until the ensuing July, it continued to be so.

To summarize briefly the course of events, it will be remembered that in August, 1862, the great Union advance inaugurated, East and West, in the preceding February, had spent its force; and, in Virginia, ceasing to be aggressive, it was thrown back to such an extent that Washington, and not Richmond, stood in danger of hostile occupation. At the same time, the European situation was far from satisfactory. Not only was the Confederate cotton campaign in progress, but every indication favored for it an early and successful

issue; and that issue involved nothing less than the outcome of the struggle. Was Cotton not indeed King? This had, in the summer of 1862, become a world question; and the machinery and life incident to and dependent upon the cotton production and the cotton textile industries, whether in Great Britain, on the continent, or in Asia, were disorganized. The social unrest and economical suffering, necessarily incident to a commercial confusion literally world-wide, were at their height. This condition of affairs was, moreover, by common consent, attributed to the American War. The blockade of the Southern cotton-shipping ports by the National Government of the United States was accepted as the obvious cause of ills and disturbances in Hindustan and China no less than in Lancashire.

The question of foreign action in some form, bearing on this situation — whether an offer of mediation, or through the formal recognition of the Confederacy as a member of the family of nations, or through a refusal farther to recognize the blockade — now presented itself. It had been in the air since the commencement of the struggle. Indeed, weeks before the attack on Fort Sumter, M. Mercier, the French Minister in Washington, had become so convinced that a permanent separation, South from North, was impending and inevitable, that he had even gone so far as to suggest to Lord Lyons that it was desirable that he, the British Minister at Washington, acting in connection with the representative of France, should be clothed with discretionary power to recognize the Confederacy. This was in March.[1] The conviction further on assumed in Mercier's mind the shape almost of an obsession;[2] and, naturally, it colored his official dispatches, operating immediately on the minds of the Emperor and his advisers in potent furtherance of the program which had early outlined itself in Mr. Slidell's busily scheming brain. Indeed, that program may be said to have originated with the French representative; for, in April, 1862, Mercier obtained a permit to visit the Confederate capital. Judah P. Benjamin was then acting as the Confederate Secretary of State, and with him, Creole Senator from Louisiana up to the previous February, the French Minister had, during their common resi-

[1] Newton, *Life of Lord Lyons*, 1. 34. [2] *Ib.*, 90.

dence in Washington, held social relations of a peculiarly friendly character. Lord Newton, in his *Life of Lord Lyons*, says of Mercier in this connection, "after the manner of French diplomatists of the period, he could not resist the temptation of trying to effect a striking *coup*." [1] Whether such was or was not his moving impulse, Mercier had concealed from Lord Lyons his project until it was too late to endeavor to dissuade him from it. Indeed, he was bent upon it. More cautious in his disposition than his colleague, Lord Lyons apprehended that in going to the Confederate capital at that time he was "as likely to get himself into a scrape as to do anything else." And it so turned out. It was an officious act, characteristic of the man and of the imperial diplomatic service.

Mercier got back on the 24th of April.[2] He returned more than ever persuaded that a restoration of the Union was impossible; [3] that unless the Powers of Europe intervened the war would last for years; that in the end the independence of the South would have to be recognized; that the evils incident to a cotton shortage would meanwhile be intensified; and that, in view of these conditions, the Governments of Europe should be on the watch for any favorable opportunity of exerting themselves in such a way as to end the war. His dispatches would in this connection be of great historic value; and, at some future time, will probably be accessible. At present, however, they are buried in the archives of the French Foreign Office; but the Minister of course freely communicated his views whether to the Emperor personally or to his official superior in the department of the French Foreign Affairs. Those views also, it so chanced, chimed in most opportunely with the plans of the Emperor in connection with the Mexican enterprise on which he was at the time fully embarked. Napoleon III, therefore, was under every inducement to exert himself actively and openly to bring the proposed intervention about.[4] A little later, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Thouvenel, was in England, and the Emperor then sent

[1] Newton, *Life of Lord Lyons*, I. 82; *Lyons to Russell*, April 14, 1862.
[2] *Lyons to Russell*, April 25, 1862.
[3] See Butler, *Judah P. Benjamin*, 288.
[4] Rhodes, IV. 94.

him a telegram desiring him unofficially to ascertain whether the British Government did not think the time had come for recognizing the South. This was in July. Thouvenel replied that from conversations which had already taken place between him and Lord Palmerston, and from the language which the Premier had just used in Parliament, it did not seem to him expedient to press the matter further at that time.[1]

The course of ensuing events must next be noted in close connection with military operations then going on both in the United States and in Mexico. The reverses to the Union arms which marked the months of July, August and early September, 1862, were already foreshadowed. On the 18th of July, it was reported in London and Liverpool that McClellan's army either had surrendered or was on the point of capitulation.[2] Under pressure of disaster, a military reorganization in face of a victorious opponent had become a necessity. So General Halleck, called from the West to Washington, superseded at the seat of government McClellan, his senior in commission. General Pope had already been put at the head of a newly organized force, intended to act in cooperation with the Army of the Potomac, but wholly independent of it. The succession of military disasters was thus provoked, which, a few weeks later, resulted in the Union forces being driven or withdrawn from Virginia soil. On the 29th of July, moreover, to the unconcealed satisfaction of Parliament as well as a large preponderance of the English press, the *Alabama*, eluding the customs officials, got to sea. It was in position to begin its work, the character of which was well and generally understood. A British-built, British-armed and British-manned Confederate commerce-destroyer had been let loose on the American merchant marine.

The second French expeditionary force to Mexico was in course of active preparation. The Emperor had been advised by the commander of the first force, sent out a year before, that in point of discipline, organization and morale, the French were so superior to the Mexicans that he (Gen. Lorencez) felt able to "assure the Emperor that at the head of six thousand men

[1] Walpole, *Twenty-five Years*, II. 55.
[2] Adams, Ms. Diary; *Mason to Slidell*, July 18, 1862.

[he] would undertake to become complete master of Mexico." Thus officially informed, Louis Napoleon, constitutionally a dreamer, was imbued with a belief that it was his mission to establish in West Indian waters a firm government, which "shall give to that Latin race beyond the ocean its ancient strength and power." [1]

From Gibraltar to Kronstadt, all Europe was intently following the above course of events. Thus, through a wholly fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, Mr. Slidell found himself in that situation for which Nature had especially designed him. The atmosphere was one of intrigue, and every condition of the environment, whether in France, in England, in Mexico, or in the Confederacy, invited manipulation. He was also in fairly close personal touch with the Emperor, at that time looked upon as the European Sphinx, and himself the busiest schemer of the day. About the middle of April the Confederate Commissioner had with him a personal interview, of which Slidell sent to Mason the following account:

My interview lasted seventy minutes (one hour, ten minutes); he was particularly gracious, I may even say cordial. I had expected him to be reserved, taking little part in conversation, making or suggesting questions and replying briefly. Far from this he talked freely, frankly, and unreservedly, spoke in the most decided terms of his sympathy and his regret that England had not shared his views. He said that he had made a great mistake in respecting a blockade which had for six months at least not been effective, that we ought to have been recognized last summer while our ports were still in our own possession. He spoke freely of the Mexican question and the probability of its soon bringing him into collision with the United States, that the treaty with Mexico if ratified by the Senate, would place them inevitably in a hostile position towards him. He asked if he offered mediation how the question of boundaries could be settled? What we would insist on? I said that we would insist on all the States where a majority of the people had already determined by their votes to join our Confederacy, leaving the people of Kentucky, Missouri and Maryland to decide further — such as whether they could or would associate their fortunes with ours. He expressed his regret that he had not been able sooner to see me and on parting said that he hoped for the future I should have less difficulty in seeing him.

[1] Martin, *Maximilian in Mexico*, 107, 108.

On the whole he left on my mind the impression that if England long persists in her inaction he would be disposed to act without her, although of course he did not commit himself to do so. He said that he had reason not to be wholly satisfied with England, she had not appreciated as she should have done his support in the *Trent* affair. There is an important part of our conversation that I will give you through Mr. Mann. On the whole my interview was highly satisfactory.[1]

At this time a sharp personal stimulus was administered to Mr. Slidell's activities. The surrender of New Orleans to the Union fleet under command of Admiral Farragut took place April 26. Immediately on receipt of the news of this event in Paris, Slidell wrote to Mason that in an interview with M. Thouvenel, the Foreign Secretary, he had frankly admitted that this occurrence "would be most disastrous, as it would give the enemy the control of the Mississippi and its tributaries, that it would not in any way modify the fixed purpose of our people to carry on the war even to an extermination. He [Thouvenel] said that was the opinion of everyone here."[2] Referring to the effect of the capture on his personal circumstances, Slidell added in the same letter: "The taking of New Orleans cuts me off from all resources while the war lasts, and that will probably be very many months. Under other circumstances, I should not care about receiving anything from Richmond. This is now to me a matter of consequence."[3]

Slidell's line of diplomatic activity was now clearly defined. Aware that concurrent action with Great Britain was fundamental in the policy of the Second Empire, Slidell's purpose was to make the most effective use possible of France to influence Great Britain in favor of a joint European recognition of the Confederacy, and, if possible, of intervention in the blockade. This failing, he further hoped so to commit Napoleon through his Mexican enterprise that, in case of a failure to bring about concurrent action, the independent recognition of the Confederacy by France would become for the Emperor a logical necessity, implying the

[1] *Slidell to Mason*, April 20, 1862.
[2] *Slidell to Mason*, May 19, 1862.
[3] *Slidell to Mason*, May 14, 1862.

presence of a formidable fleet in the waters of the Gulf, "strong enough to keep [that coast] clear of every Federal cruiser." Such a naval armament had in fact already been provided as a necessary adjunct to the Mexican outfit. As Slidell now expressed it to Mason, "I shall be *very much* surprised and disappointed if the Emperor do not take the matter in hand on his own hook." This was written August 3. Three days later, on the 6th, Slidell further wrote to the same effect. Referring to a discussion which occurred in the House of Lords two days previous, in the course of which Earl Russell, being questioned, had made certain statements, Slidell thus expressed himself:

I think that it may now be assumed that England will not move, and I can only account for the inaction of the English Ministry on the hypothesis that they desire to see the North entirely exhausted and broken down, that they are willing in order to attain this object to suffer their own people to starve, and [themselves to] play the poltroon in the face of Europe. [Russell's] answer must have been given without any consultation with this Government. If I am right in this opinion, the Emperor has been treated with a rudeness approaching to indignity, which will make him the better disposed to pursue his own policy without consulting England. If he do, Russell's prompt reply ought not to be regretted. France will for us be a safer ally than England.

With this program rapidly assuming shape in his mind, on July 17 Slidell had submitted to the Emperor a direct and definite proposition, which was also a little later communicated in writing to Thouvenel, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This proposition was based on formal instructions drawn up by Benjamin, the Confederate Secretary of State, at the time of Mercier's visit to Richmond. Benjamin's instructions ran in part as follows:

It is well understood that there exists at present a temporary embarrassment in the finances of France, which might have the effect of deterring that government from initiating a policy likely to superinduce the necessity for naval expeditions. If, under these circumstances, you should after cautious inquiry be able to satisfy yourself that the grant of a subsidy for defraying the expenses of such expeditions would suffice for removing any obstacle to an ar-

rangement or understanding with the Emperor, you are at liberty to enter into engagements to that effect.[1]

Slidell, accordingly, construing his instructions broadly, now proposed to Louis Napoleon that, in return for Confederate recognition, France was to receive in bales of cotton what amounted to the equivalent in cash of a hundred million francs, together with most favorable tariff arrangements; and, so far as Mexico was concerned, an immediate alliance offensive and defensive was to be arranged.[2] This was in every way an opportune as well as tempting inducement; and the Emperor encouraged the Confederate representative by assuring him that he, the Emperor, had moved in the matter, and was exerting himself to bring about combined action by European powers. A diplomatic intimation meanwhile shortly after reached Mr. Slidell to the effect that it was undesirable the special inducements held forth should come to the knowledge of the English Government;[3] and, accordingly, when Slidell confidentially communicated with his London colleague on this topic, he did not fail to intimate to him that the existence of an understanding so markedly advantageous to the French Government had best not reach those the Emperor proposed to have associated with him in the contemplated movement. It was presumably at this stage of proceedings that the telegraphic message from the Emperor personally to Thouvenel, already referred to, was sent.

Thus Slidell was putting in most effective diplomatic work, and the tide not only seemed to be setting, but, from all directions, actually was setting in favor of the Confederacy, and that strongly. On the 7th of August Parliament was prorogued, and the Government, relieved of its presence for some months to come, felt comparatively free. The situation in Lancashire was, however, most disturbing. It even threatened to get beyond all available means of relief, and not impossibly of control. The market was in a condition of unprecedented excitement, for American cotton was quoted at thirty pence per pound, while great uneasiness was felt because of a belief that the next steamer from America might not improb-

[1] April 12, 1862. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Confederacy*, II. 229.
[2] *Slidell to Benjamin*, July 25, 1862.
[3] *Slidell to Mason*, July 30, 1862.

ably bring news of the Confederates being in Washington. In such case, as the result of some European offer of mediation, a speedy recognition of the Confederacy was anticipated, and Liverpool might find itself flooded with cotton arrivals. The most prudent and the most daring were equally at a loss. The suffering in the Lancashire districts was at the same time rapidly intensifying. The number of those either actually paupers or dependent upon others for relief was mounting up at the rate of approximately a thousand each day; and it was reported that as compared with the previous year there had been an increase of over 113,000 persons in receipt of parochial relief, or some 263 per cent. In five manufacturing centres, 32,718 operatives were reported as working short time, while 33,651 were wholly unemployed; 14,530 only were working full time. The weekly loss of wages in those five unions alone amounted to £27,430.[1]

In view of these facts and the situation thus set forth, the minds of both Lord Palmerston and Earl Russell naturally a little later on turned to the question of policy as respects the American conflict. Was not the time actually come, or at least probably at hand, when a new attitude should be assumed? If so, what form should it take? Should the coöperation of other European powers be invited? And, so far as France was concerned, the intimations, direct and indirect, semi-official and unofficial, received first through Mr. Lindsay and later through M. Thouvenel, bore fruit.[2] As Palmerston expressed it, "France, we know, is quite ready, and only waiting for our concurrence."[3] So far as the cause of Confederacy was concerned, all the indications were favorable.

Lord Palmerston accordingly now broached the subject in characteristic fashion to Earl Russell; and the two, as the result of an interchange of views, agreed on both the expediency and nature of ministerial action looking, as respects the American conflict, to a radical change of policy. This subject, however, elsewhere discussed,[4] is familiar history, and I

[1] *Index*, I. 354.

[2] *Slidell to Mason*, August 6, 1862; Butler's *Benjamin*, 299.

[3] Walpole's *Russell*, II. 362.

[4] *Life of C. F. Adams* (Am. Statesmen Series), chap. XV; *Studies, Military and Diplomatic*, 400-412; *Trans-Atlantic Historical Solidarity*, 97-106. See, also, Rhodes, IV. and, generally, the researches of Callahan, Latané and others.

have no new facts now to present in connection therewith. I shall not, therefore, encumber our *Proceedings* with what would at best be only a useless repetition. At this juncture Lord Palmerston was at Broadlands, his home in the South of England. Earl Russell was at Gotha, Germany, in attendance on the Queen, who had left England in the closing days of August. She, recently widowed, was in a state of great mental depression. When not absorbed in a sense of bereavement, her mind was occupied with family and strictly domestic affairs; for the marriage of the Prince of Wales, now arranged, took place some months later.

The proposed change of policy, based on a tender of friendly mediation to the parties to the American conflict, decided on by the two ministers had been officially communicated to the Queen, and she had assented thereto. In doing so she had merely expressed a wish that Austria, Prussia and Russia should be consulted before action was taken. It was, however, well understood that the counsels of no one carried greater weight in the mind of the Queen than those of King Leopold of Belgium; and King Leopold was at this time writing personal letters to the Emperor urging him to use every exertion to cause England to join in a recognition of the Confederacy, or take any other course likely to put an end to the American struggle. The Confederate agents naturally set much store on the influence thus brought to bear in their favor.[1] As Mason expressed it to Slidell, "You know, I suppose, the great and affectionate respect of Queen Victoria for her uncle." So it only remained to bring the matter before the Cabinet for its approval; and that approval seems to have been assumed as of course. The importance of the action proposed was fully realized, and, in order to give proper attention to it, the Foreign Secretary now left Gotha, returning to England and his Downing Street office. Getting there about the 22d of September, the next two weeks were utilized by him in the preparation of an elaborate Cabinet circular, in furtherance of the program agreed upon between himself and the Premier. He was relieved as respects attendance on the Queen by Lord Granville, then President of the Council. In the confidential circular he now drew up the Foreign Secre-

[1] *Slidell to Mason*, October 29; *Mason to Slidell*, October 31, 1862.

tary submitted to his colleagues the question whether, in the light of what had taken place in America and the conditions of distress prevailing throughout the manufacturing districts of England and France, it was not the duty of Europe "to ask both parties, in the most friendly and conciliatory terms, to agree to a suspension of arms for the purpose of weighing calmly the advantages of peace" — and so forth and so on.

Harmless, and even philanthropic and benevolent, in aspect and tone, this was in fact a most insidious, not to say hypocritical, proposition; for it was an initial step — the entering wedge. The national government, it was perfectly well known, would reject the offer. If, then, the Confederacy signified its acceptance — what was the next step to be? Of course, recognition; to be speedily followed by a joint intervention, English and French, at least to the extent of a refusal to recognize further the blockade. Europe was to the last degree benevolent; but it wanted cotton, and proposed to get it. Lord Palmerston and Earl Russell knew just as well what the game they were playing meant, as did James M. Mason and John Slidell, when they put the Emperor up to playing it. Meanwhile, this attitude and style of utterance were in no way characteristic of either Palmerston or Russell — the somewhat cynical bonhommie of the one or the curt downrightness of the other. But it is always to be remembered that John Bull was then, in contemplation of our most unfraternal strife, indulging in one of his most unctuous, Pharisaic moods. Happily forgetful of Burgos incidents, in his Peninsular Wars, and of more recent Hindoo, Sepoy-suppression methods, he could not find words adequate to the expression of the horror felt over the unchristian, not to say ungentlemanly, way in which we were conducting ourselves and hostilities in America. "History afforded no example," etc., etc., etc. Snivelling and with upturned eyes, Russell and Westbury now recorded their sense of the "horrible atrocities" which marked the course of a war which "may become worse than any we have yet heard of in barbarism and atrocity." The Chadband, I am-better-than-thou, element in the British make-up was unmistakably and, to Americans, most unpleasantly in evidence. On the other hand, the calm and self-contained Lyons was at this time absent from his post and temporarily in England, having left

in charge of the legation at Washington a Mr. Stuart, "a strong partizan of the South." And Mr. Stuart, as the record shows, vied with Mercier in his obsessions as respects mediation and recognition. A most unhappy substitute for Lyons, this gentleman was now advising the Foreign Secretary and Cabinet that the general aspect of things in America was, as the result of the military reverses then sustained by the Union Army in Virginia, fast ripening for mediation and peace. There were, in short, more hopeful indications of returning sense; and he was almost convinced that any proposals which Great Britain might now make in concert with France, if moderately and courteously worded, would, after a certain amount of threats and howling by the violent portion of the press, be favorably received by a majority of the public. And so, expressing himself in harmony with such suggestions direct from the scene of conflict, the Foreign Secretary oiled his entering wedge with language most moderate and courteous. Altogether, it was, for John Russell, quite a model of Pharisaic unctuosity.

Next to Lord Palmerston and Earl Russell, Mr. Gladstone was the most influential member of the ministry then in office. Consulted as to the change of policy proposed, he gave to it his emphatic approval. It wholly coincided with the views he at that time entertained. The cry of distress coming up from the cotton-spinning districts appealed to his strong humanitarian sympathies. He, moreover, like Lord Palmerston, and indeed the great mass of European observers and supposed authorities, was fully convinced that a re-establishment of the American Union was impossible, as well as from every point of view undesirable. Finally, by a subtle process of reasoning always characteristic of him and them, Mr. Gladstone, in common with a large number of his countrymen, had most conveniently persuaded himself that the immediate victory of the slave-owner would surely result in the ultimate downfall of slavery. He had also conceived an idea that the Northern States could be reconciled to the severance of the South by the friendly acquisition of the Canadas and the other British North American continental possessions; to which arrangement, as Mr. Gladstone was then inclined to think, no sound objection existed. More than thirty years later, reverting in a spirit of unsparing self-examination to what now occurred, he

wrote: "I really, though most strangely, believed that it was an act of friendliness to all America [to cause the North] to recognize that the struggle was virtually at an end." [1]

The concurrence of Mr. Gladstone in the proposed program apparently made the assurance of its adoption doubly sure; for, as Lord Granville had a few months before, and in another connection, written to Lord Canning, "He [Gladstone], Johnny [Russell], and Pam [Palmerston] are a formidable phalanx when they are united in opposition to the whole Cabinet in foreign matters." Not only was this so, but in the present case, so far as sympathy with the struggling and now apparently victorious Confederacy was concerned, a large majority of the Cabinet were with "the formidable phalanx." So Granville, an experienced judge of Cabinet situations, looking upon the conclusion as foregone, wrote to a colleague, "I suspect you will settle" in the way proposed; "it appears to me a great mistake." [2]

For weeks the tension had been on the steady increase. Something of a decisive character must, it would seem, soon occur; and, on each side, the representatives of the contending parties were preparing for an immediately impending crisis. Mr. W. S. Lindsay, member of Parliament representing Sunderland, was throughout the conflict a warm English supporter of the Confederate cause. His personal relations with the Confederate commissioners were so close as to be almost intimate. He in June brought forward a motion that in the opinion of the House of Commons the time had come when "the propriety of offering mediation with a view to terminating hostilities between the contending parties [in America] is worthy of the serious and immediate attention of Her Majesty's Government." After consulting with Disraeli, Roebuck, and other leading Conservatives and Liberals, as well as with Mason and Slidell, Mr. Lindsay had in July concluded that conditions were ripe for pressing his motion.[3] Thouvenel, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, was then in London.[4] Why was he there? Slidell, writing at this juncture from Paris, assured Mason, as the result of a "long, interesting and satisfactory interview with the Emperor"

[1] Morley, *Gladstone*, II. 81.
[2] Fitzmaurice, *Granville*, I. 442.
[3] *Mason to Slidell*, July 11, 1862.
[4] *Ib.*, July 13, 1862.

that "things are right in France." He further told Mason that he had received the Emperor's approval of a formal demand for immediate recognition, to be simultaneously made by himself in France and by Mason in England.[1] Mason in reply wrote: "I am happy to say that the rout before Richmond has had the happiest effect here in all quarters, and things look well for Lindsay's motion tonight." He added: "We have rumors today coming through the bankers that McClellan's army had capitulated, he escaping in a gun-boat."[2]

The debate on the motion took place on the evening of the 18th. Concerning it Mr. Lindsay had a month before written as follows to Mr. Mason: "Lord Russell sent to me last night to get the words of my motion. I have sent them to him tonight, and I have embraced the opportunity of opening my mind to his Lordship. I have told him that I have postponed my motion in courtesy to him — that the sympathy of nine-tenths of the members of the House was in favor of immediate recognition, and that even if the Government was not prepared to accept my motion, a majority of votes *would* be obtained within the next fortnight." He added: "I further told his Lordship that recognition was a *right* which no one would deny us the form of exercising. That the fear of war if we exercised it was a delusion. That the majority of the leading men in the Northern States would thank us for exercising it, and that even Seward himself might be glad to see it exercised so as to give him an excuse for getting out of the terrible war into which he had dragged his people."[3] The debate[4] closed with a speech from the Premier, after which, at his suggestion the motion was withdrawn. Of what Palmerston said on this occasion Mr. Adams the next day wrote: "It was cautious and wise, but enough could be gathered from it to show that mischief to us in some shape will only be averted by the favor of Divine Providence on our own efforts. The anxiety attending my responsibility is only postponed." A few days later Mr. Adams further wrote: "The suspense is becoming more and more painful. I do not think since the beginning of the war I have felt so profoundly anxious for the

[1] *Slidell to Mason*, July 16, 1862.
[2] *Mason to Slidell*, July 18, 1862.
[3] *Lindsay to Mason*, June 18, 1862.
[4] *Index*, I. 214; 3 Hansard, CLXVIII. 549.

safety of the country." Then, on the 29th of September: "For a fortnight my mind has been running so strongly on this, night and day, that it seems almost to threaten my life."

In view of the emergency possibly impending, Mr. Adams had weeks before written home asking from Secretary Seward specific instructions for his guidance if what he apprehended should occur. Those instructions he had in due time received; they were explicit. They were also characteristic. The despatch in which they were imbedded, prolix and Sewardesque, is also otherwise curiously suggestive. Suffice it to say that, in its essential passages, carrying the standard entrusted to him high and with a firm hand, the American Secretary in that hour of darkness, defeat and discouragement bore himself in a way in which his country may take pride. Fifty years later the concentrated excerpts read well. The despatch was in part as follows:

If the British government shall in any way approach you directly or indirectly with propositions which assume or contemplate an appeal to the President on the subject of our internal affairs, whether it seem to imply a purpose to dictate, or to mediate, or to advise, or even to solicit or persuade, you will answer that you are forbidden to debate, to hear, or in any way receive, entertain, or transmit any communication of the kind. You will make the same answer whether the proposition comes from the British government alone or from that government in combination with any other Power.

If you are asked an opinion what reception the President would give to such a proposition, if made here, you will reply that you are not instructed, but you have no reason for supposing that it would be entertained.

If contrary to our expectations the British government, either alone or in combination with any other government, should acknowledge the insurgents, while you are remaining without instructions from this Government concerning that event, you will immediately suspend the exercise of your functions. . . . I have now in behalf of the United States, and by the authority of their chief executive magistrate, performed an important duty. Its possible consequences have been weighed, and its solemnity is therefore felt and freely acknowledged. This duty has brought us to meet and confront the danger of a war with Great Britain and other states allied with the insurgents who are in arms for the overthrow of

the American Union. You will perceive that we have approached the contemplation of that crisis with the caution which great reluctance has inspired. But I trust that you will also have perceived that the crisis has not appalled us.[1]

With these ringing instructions before him, Mr. Adams now awaited the outcome he was powerless in any material way to affect. Meanwhile, acting under a proper sense of diplomatic restraint, he did what was in his power to do. He communicated the tenor of his instructions to W. E. Forster, a member of Parliament and stanch friend of the Union, who held confidential relations with Mr. Milner-Gibson, a member of the Cabinet. Mr. Forster expressed the opinion that the Government should be made aware of the nature of these instructions before it further committed itself; but what action, if any, he took to that end does not appear. It is, however, in no way an unreasonable historical assumption to suppose that the intimation thus given reached its intended Cabinet destination. If so, it could not have failed to convey to the minds of those responsible for the policy about to be pursued its ultimate possible consequence in the matter of American *Alabamas*. Both Lord Palmerston and Earl Russell also retained vivid personal recollections of 1812.

The special Cabinet meeting was called for the 23d of October; to all outward appearance and in all human probability that was the fateful day; the ordeal must then be faced. The course of events was arranged. As it rested in the mind of the Foreign Secretary, it began with an innocent-looking proposal of a cessation of hostilities; friendly offices in the way of mediation were next to be extended; with a recognition of the Confederacy in reserve, should this offer be declined. So far as the American minister was concerned and the course by him to be pursued in the contingency now arising, the instructions of the Secretary were explicit. They covered the ground.

The momentous 23d of October came and passed. Upon it,

[1] So far as is ascertainable never made public in full, the body of this despatch of August 2, 1862, is to be found in *Messages and Documents*, 1862–1863, Part I. 165–168. The passages quoted were there omitted, and were first printed as from Ms. by Rhodes (IV. 342-343) in 1899, and by Frederic Bancroft in his *Seward* (II. 294–296) in 1900.

so far as the outer world was advised, nothing happened. The unexpected had again occurred.

What had taken place? Why was the carefully prepared program, so far-reaching, so world-momentous, suddenly, quietly, postponed — ostensibly abandoned? It is a curious story — that which I am now about to tell. But I must preface it with an acknowledgment — an acknowledgment amounting almost to a recantation. Not pleasant to make, it none the less illustrates somewhat strikingly, I think, the force, in historical narrative as well as in political and religious discussion, of Cromwell's famous remark to the Presbyterian ministers in Edinburgh Castle: "I beseech you, brethren, to think it possible that you may be wrong." I in this case confess to having heretofore been wrong — to having reached erroneous conclusions. Not only did I misinterpret the course of events, but I attributed motives to individuals which I have since seen cause to believe did not influence them, or, in any event did not influence them to the extent I assumed.

Following such authorities as were then accessible, and drawing from them inferences inherently probable, if not manifestly logical deductions, I attributed what now occurred to an indiscretion on the part of one member of the English Cabinet. Through that indiscretion he put himself in the power, so to speak, of a chief who felt no good-will towards him. The offending Cabinet member was Mr. Gladstone; the chief was the Premier, Lord Palmerston. It was, as I saw it, a Cabinet collision between two very eminent public characters, in which one availed himself of an opportunity to assert his authority and to secure an advantage over the other. In what now ensued I stated that "the hand of the Premier was on the political lever," and that he had in the outcome caused a somewhat forthputting subordinate to realize that he was not yet master. To this Cabinet controversy I attributed a fortunate delay of action on an issue of international policy which, occurring at a most critical period, led to far-reaching results.

In arriving at this conclusion, moreover, as I have said, I merely made use of the material at my disposal, relying upon the evidence of those who, it might naturally be assumed, were best and most correctly informed.

In the light of new material contained in recent publications,

and more especially from information derived from unpublished English sources, access to which has recently been given me, I now find myself compelled to the conclusion that I was mistaken in both my statements and my inferences; that, in short, the causes to which I attributed important political action in no way, or only in very slight degree, affected it or the course of events.

There was, I am now satisfied, no collision at this time between the Premier, Lord Palmerston, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Gladstone. The utterances of Mr. Gladstone were, it is true, most indiscreet and politically "inconvenient;" but I am satisfied the Premier took no offence at them, and that the relations between the two throughout the time in question were, if not actually friendly, yet courteous and thoroughly considerate. Thus the historical situation I at Oxford somewhat dramatically pictured has since, so to speak, gone to pieces on my hands. So to-day and here, I propose to set forth the facts as I now find they really were, substituting for what I have heretofore said explanatory of the mystery a more commonplace, but certainly, I must admit, a more natural as well as satisfactory solution. It has the advantage, too, of being historically correct.

I will now proceed to state what actually did occur; though, in so doing, I upset not only the inferences to be drawn from my predecessors in the line of narrative, but also the conclusions and statements of other members of my own family directly at the time concerned, who naturally would be assumed to have been peculiarly well informed.

This acknowledgment of error duly made, I return to the narrative — my revised explanation of the British Cabinet mystery of October, 1862. It was, it will be remembered — for dates in this connection are all-important — the 23d of October that had been assigned for the special Cabinet meeting to consider the change of policy proposed. Now it so chanced that sixteen days before, on the 7th of that month, Mr. Gladstone delivered himself of that famous Newcastle speech, still remembered, in which he declared that Jefferson Davis had "made a nation," and that the independence of the Confederacy and dissolution of the American Union were as certain "as any event yet future and contingent could be." That

speech, a marvel of indiscretion — or, as Mr. Gladstone himself subsequently expressed it, "a mistake of incredible grossness"— though at the moment it caused in the mind of Mr. Adams a feeling akin to dismay, in reality went far towards working a favorable solution of the problem which so deeply concerned him. At a very critical moment complicating a delicate Cabinet situation, it prematurely precipitated action.

Speaking for himself — "playing off his own bat," as Lord Palmerston would have expressed it — Mr. Gladstone had foreshadowed a ministerial policy. The utterance was inspired; in venturing on it Mr. Gladstone unquestionably supposed, as he had good cause to know, he spoke the minds of both Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell. In fact, writing to him in his familiar way two weeks before the Newcastle occasion, Lord Palmerston had thus outlined the proposed change of policy:

It seems to Russell and me that the time is fast approaching when some joint offer of mediation by England, France, and Russia if they would be a party to it, might be made with some prospect of success to the combatants in North America, and Russell is going to instruct Cowley by a private letter to sound the French Government as to their willingness to agree to such a measure if formally proposed to them. Of course, no actual step to such effect could be taken without the sanction of the Cabinet. But if I am not mistaken, you would be inclined to approve such a course.

The Proposal would naturally be made to both North and South, and if both accepted we should recommend an armistice and cessation of Blockades with a view to negotiations on the basis of separation. If both declined we must of course leave them to go on; if the South accepted and the North declined we should then, I conceive, acknowledge the Independence of the South. But we ought, Russell and I imagine, to declare the maintenance of our neutrality even in the case of our acknowledging the Independence of the South. Ld. Lyons would be going back towards the middle of October, and his Return would be the fitting opportunity for such a step if determined upon. It looks as if matters were rapidly coming to a Crisis and perhaps we may have to make the move earlier than the middle of October. A great battle appeared by the last accounts to be coming on. If Maclellan is badly defeated the Federal Cause will be manifestly hopeless, if Jackson should sustain a serious reverse he will be in a dangerous Position so far North

and cut off from his supplies. But a few days will bring us important accounts.

Palmerston then added the following significant intimation, bearing more particularly upon the topics on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer would presumably dwell:

I saw the other day that you are going to have some great dinner given you in the early part of next month. I hope the Chancellor of the Exchequer will not be too sympathizing with the Tax Payer, nor tell the Country that they are paying too much taxation, have too large Establishments, and ought to agitate to bring the House of Commons and the Government to more economical ways and habits. These topics suit best Cobden and Bright and their followers.

The principle of the so-called "collectivity" of the British Cabinet has been often discussed, and the rule is well established that ministers are in no wise free to put forward each "his own views at large public meetings and elsewhere." As Lord Palmerston a few days later wrote to Clarendon, referring to Gladstone's Newcastle speech: "A minister, whether speaking in or out of Parliament, ought to confine his remarks to the past and the present, and to steer clear of the future, unless he is authorized to announce the result of some Cabinet decision."[1] Now, in this case, no Cabinet decision had been reached; nor, if it had been reached, would the public announcement of it have been committed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It would have fallen within the province of either the Foreign Secretary or the Premier. As it was, a premature announcement from an unauthorized source precipitated something bearing a close resemblance to a Cabinet crisis, and, so far as the schemes of the Confederate Commissioners and the French Emperor were concerned, furnished a fresh illustration of the truth of Robert Burns's familiar aphorism as respects the fate not seldom befalling even the best-laid plans.

The ministerial situation then existing needs here to be understood, and has constantly to be borne in mind. The Palmerston-Russell Cabinet, so called, had been formed in

[1] Maxwell, *Clarendon*, II. 267.

June, 1859. The Premier, born in October, 1784, was then in his seventy-fifth year. Earl Russell, his colleague in the ministry and associate in its formation, was sixty-six. The House of Commons was very evenly divided. The previous government — that headed by Lord Derby, with Mr. Disraeli as its leader in the Commons — had, as the result of an appeal to the constituencies, been turned out of office by a majority of thirteen only on a division numbering 638 members. Under these circumstances the two leaders jointly responsible for the new government had sought to combine in the Cabinet representatives of all shades of Liberal principles. The result was a body of exceptional ability, but composed of men by no means always concurrent in their opinions, or harmonious in action. Mr. Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer; and that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were not in general harmony was well known in ministerial circles. On the contrary, Lord Palmerston disliked and habitually thwarted Mr. Gladstone; and Mr. Gladstone instinctively distrusted Lord Palmerston. So far did this go that the two had, a year before the time in question, been "in violent antagonism" on financial propositions. Lord Granville, himself a member of the Cabinet, had informed a correspondent: "For two months Gladstone had been on half-cock of resignation. . . . Palmerston has tried him hard once or twice by speeches and Cabinet minutes, and says that the only way to deal with him is to bully him a little; and Palmerston appears to be in the right." To the same effect Bright had then written to Cobden: "Gladstone has been in a painful and critical position; from day to day it has been doubtful if he could remain under a leader who has used him so treacherously." This referred to the Premier's characteristic action in procuring the defeat in the Lords of Gladstone's bill repealing the Paper Duties. Then, the next year, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had countered on the Premier by incorporating this measure of repeal in the Budget, and so compelling its passage by the Lords.

A species of Cabinet *modus vivendi* was then arrived at, and had since been more or less observed; but the two men were by nature antagonistic. Built on wholly different models, they were, to use the Italian expression, constitutionally *antipatica*. Palmerston was indisputably old; Gladstone, a man

of fifty-four, was in the full maturity of his great powers. His star was looming large in the Parliamentary heavens — distinctly in the ascendant. One competitor only, Sir George Cornewall Lewis, could challenge prospective leadership with him.

Of Lewis something must here be said, for at a most critical juncture for us — that now under consideration — he was a vital political factor. A man of marked individuality and great force, Lewis temperamentally appealed to Palmerston. Though very differently constituted, the two men got on together. Lewis had himself been Chancellor of the Exchequer in Palmerston's previous ministry (1856–1857), and had then won the confidence of the House of Commons. In the debate on the Budget he had introduced, he successfully withstood the combined attacks of both Gladstone and Disraeli. In fact, the rise of Lewis in parliamentary estimate had been as marked as it was rapid. Later, on the formation of the Palmerston-Russell government, he had yielded precedence to Gladstone, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lewis accepting the less considered positions, first of Home Secretary, and then (1861) of Secretary for War. He is described by Sir Spencer Walpole, who spoke with personal knowledge, as being without the imagination which attracts attention or the eloquence which commands it, but as having knowledge, ability and judgment. Thus his temperament, Walpole further adds, made him a power in the Cabinet; and, though it procured him little or no notice in the country at large, won for him the respect of the Commons. In the House he was regarded as one of the few men who might possibly in the not remote future preside over the fortunes of the country.[1] Palmerston, though still vigorous, must, it was obvious, soon pass from the stage. With him also were to go both a generation and a political system — the generation of Castlereagh, Wellington, Melbourne and Peel, and the system of ministerial government which had grown into acceptance through the working of the Reform Act of 1832 — a transition system based on a species of equilibrium attempted between a reformed House of Commons on the one side and an hereditary Chamber of Peers on the other. This system had, with more or less success, served its pur-

[1] *Twenty-five Years*, I. 74.

pose through the life-time of a generation; but, in 1862, manifestly antiquated, it no longer worked in reasonable harmony with existing conditions, social and industrial. It was, therefore, generally accepted that, with Palmerston gone, a drastic constitutional revision would be in order and inevitable. The leadership would then go to younger men, and either to Gladstone or to Lewis; and Palmerston, it was well understood, favored the latter. So far as was in his power, he designated Lewis as his residuary ministerial legatee. But this arrangement, if in any degree practicable, was made impossible by the premature and altogether unexpected death of Lewis on April 13, 1863 — only six months after the occurrence of the events now under consideration. It was probably then that Palmerston, reading the future not incorrectly, had been heard to say: "Gladstone will soon have it all his own way; and whenever he gets my place we shall have strange doings." [1] Meanwhile in the closing months of 1862 Lewis was still alive; and Palmerston, so to speak, held the fort. As between him and Gladstone, it was a case of armed Cabinet observation.

Under these circumstances the Chancellor of the Exchequer had in the autumn gone on what proved to be a sort of triumphal political progress through the northern counties. Surprising even him by its manifestations, it amounted to a popular ovation; and, not unnaturally, his colleagues, especially his chief, took cognizance of it. Suddenly, in course of it, came the highly sensational and quite uncalled for utterance on the American situation, then the foremost topic in the public mind. From his long-subsequent published diary entries, it appears that what Mr. Gladstone there said was no hasty, impromptu, dinner-table utterance; it had, on the contrary, been, as he thought, carefully considered. The inference appears to be unavoidable. In taking such a course, and committing his colleagues as well as himself by his utterances, Mr. Gladstone, as a member of the Government, spoke with a purpose; but that purpose was not distinctly apparent at the time, nor has the mystery since been satisfactorily explained. A momentous utterance, Mr. Gladstone himself afterward referred to it as "an error the most singular and palpable."

[1] Trevelyan, *Bright*, 344.

Lord Morley in his *Life* (II. 79), plainly puzzled, says that it was "a great mistake . . . of which [Gladstone] was destined never to hear the last." Thirty years later Gladstone himself wrote — "This declaration [was] most unwarrantable to be made by a minister of the crown with no authority other than his own. . . . The fortunes of the South were at their zenith. Many who wished well to the Northern cause despaired of its success. The friends of the North in England were beginning to advise that it should give way, for the avoidance of further bloodshed and greater calamity. I weakly supposed that the time had come when respectful suggestions of this kind, founded on the necessity of the case, were required by a spirit of that friendship which, in so many contingencies of life, has to offer sound recommendations with a knowledge that they will not be popular." (II. 81.)

I have heretofore, and recently at Oxford, thought to account for this Newcastle utterance upon an hypothesis which I am now satisfied is untenable. I reasoned as follows: Mr. Gladstone was familiar with the mental processes and political methods of his official chief. He was also deeply interested after his own fashion in the proposed change of policy as respects the United States; hence it is not unfair to surmise that the Chancellor of the Exchequer suspected that, for reasons presently to be considered, the Premier's mind and purpose as respects the proposed change of policy were less clearly assured than had at first been the case, or than his colleague thought desirable. As matter of fact, considering the thing from a ministerial and parliamentary point of view, Palmerston had really begun to entertain grave doubts as to the tactical wisdom of the proposed move. Subsequently as the result of much self-communing, Gladstone came to the conclusion that it would be well, if possible, to force the hand of his Chief, thus assuring the action which seemed under the circumstances, highly desirable. This "forcing-the-hand" historical hypothesis I now find myself compelled to abandon. While, so far as Palmerston and his subsequent action are concerned, inconsistent with the record since come to light, it does injustice to Mr. Gladstone. My reasons for coming to this conclusion I shall presently set forth; meanwhile, on the other hand, I was not without both plausible evidence and apparent

authority for reaching and stating the earlier conclusions just referred to. As an illustration of erroneous historical inference the story will bear telling.

Two writers, both men of judgment and enjoying access to the most reliable sources of information, had expressed themselves on this head. Sir Spencer Walpole, the biographer of Earl Russell, says that Mr. Gladstone's Newcastle declaration "was so inconvenient" that "Lord Palmerston sent for Sir George Cornewall Lewis, and told him that if he [Sir George] did not reply to Mr. Gladstone, it would be necessary for him [the Premier] to do so himself." [1] To the same effect but in language far stronger, Mr. Henry Adams wrote: "Gladstone, October 7, tried to force Palmerston's hand by treating the intervention as a *fait accompli*. Russell assented, but Palmerston put up Sir George Cornewall Lewis to contradict Gladstone and treated him sharply in the press. . . . Never in the history of political turpitude had any brigand of modern civilisation offered a worse example [than that offered by Gladstone on this occasion]. The proof of it was that it outraged even Palmerston, who immediately put up Sir George Cornewall Lewis to repudiate the Chancellor of the Exchequer, against whom he turned his press at the same time. Palmerston had no notion of letting his hand be forced by Gladstone." [2]

Relying on these authorities and drawing natural inferences and obvious conclusions from certain undisputed data, in my Oxford Lectures and elsewhere I attributed to the Cabinet situation just described a greater influence on the turn of events than correctly belonged to it. I said: "The hesitation and postponement brought about by Lord Palmerston in consequence of Mr. Gladstone's Newcastle speech thus saved the [American] situation." Undoubtedly the Newcastle utterance, and its reception by other members of the ministry as well as by the Premier, did exercise an influence, and a not inconsiderable influence, on the policy subsequently decided upon and pursued; but more recent investigation in unpublished material, combined with new light from printed sources, clearly shows that this influence was not so altogether

[1] *Twenty-five Years*, II. 57.
[2] *Education of Henry Adams*, 136, 140.

controlling as I had inferred. It certainly did not operate in the way, nor altogether through the channels, my authorities had indicated. The Premier did at the time express himself decidedly, though with no indications of a ruffled temper, as to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's indiscreet and highly "inconvenient" utterances; but, on the other hand, it is not clear that he sent for Lewis, or imposed on him the function of a reply. In fact, it would appear he had no occasion so to do. Lewis was apparently quite ready to take action on his own part. It is to be borne in mind that it was now Autumn — the British vacation period. Parliament was not in session; the Queen was in Germany; the members of the Cabinet were scattered. Most of them were in the country, for the shooting season was on; some few of them only were at their offices. Lord Palmerston was in the South of England, at Broadlands; Lewis was in Wales, at his country home.

Our knowledge of what took place is thus derived chiefly from newspaper columns and such of the private letters then exchanged as have since chanced to appear in the numerous memoirs of the public characters concerned. It thence appears that the proposed change of policy outlined in the memorial of the Foreign Secretary of October 13 had been matter of serious consideration with certain members of the Cabinet; and this almost from the moment it had been agreed upon by the "two ancient masters," as in familiar correspondence Palmerston and Russell were not over-respectfully designated by their associates. Palmerston, moreover, had especially requested Earl Russell to inform the Duke of Newcastle. The head of the Colonial Office, Newcastle, as such, was interested in a change of policy which obviously and deeply concerned Canada. Inasmuch as Lord Granville was now in attendance upon the Queen at Gotha, and her mental condition, though not openly discussed, was well understood, he also had to be advised; for, as Mason, the Confederate commissioner in London, about this time wrote to Mr. Hunter, the Confederate Secretary of State, "It is said that [the Queen] is under great constitutional depression and nervously sensitive to anything that looks like war." Much apprehension was in fact then felt lest she "lapse into insania." [1] There is at this stage of

[1] Mason, *Life of Mason*, 264, 315.

developments no indication whatever, in the letters of Granville or in the other correspondence come to light, of any further exercise of influence by the Queen or of consideration paid her. Directly or indirectly, she nowhere appears as a factor in the situation. Granville, however, in reply to the intimation conveyed him, wrote, under date of September 27, 1862, a detailed letter to the Foreign Secretary, in which he set forth the reasons why he considered it "premature to depart from the policy which has hitherto been adopted by you and Lord Palmerston, and which notwithstanding the strong antipathy to the North, the strong sympathy with the South, and the passionate wish to have cotton, has met with such general approval from Parliament, the press and the public."[1] Russell also now received a letter from Lewis, in which strong ground was taken against the change of policy proposed. These letters Russell, immediately on their receipt, forwarded to Palmerston, who wrote back, October 2, admitting that he had found in them much matter for serious consideration. It was at this date, therefore, and in consequence of these letters, that doubts as to the expediency of the course agreed upon seem first to have entered into the mind of the Premier.

It was still five days before Mr. Gladstone delivered himself at Newcastle. In view of the proposed demonstration there, Lord Palmerston had written (September 24) to Gladstone, the letter already referred to, and from which extracts have been given. The next day, Thursday, September 25th, Gladstone replied by a missive marked "Private," written from Hawarden Castle. In it he expressed himself as glad to hear what the Premier had told him, and further went on to say that he, for two reasons, desired prompt action on the lines indicated. First, the rapid progress of the Confederate arms threatened, in his apprehension, to raise other very serious difficulties. His chief reason, however, for desiring that there should be as little delay as possible in deciding upon the proposed change of policy was next given as follows: "The population of Lancashire have borne their sufferings with a fortitude and patience exceeding all example, and almost all belief. But if in any *one* of the great towns, resignation should, even for a single day, give place to excitement, and an outbreak

[1] Fitzmaurice, *Granville*, I. 442.

should occur, our position in the face of America, and our influence for good might be seriously affected; we might then seem to be interfering with less of dignity on the ground of our immediate interests, and rather in the attitude of parties than as representing the general interests of humanity and peace." [1]

Up to this point, therefore (Thursday, September 25), the two men were in complete accord on the question under consideration. It was seven days later (October 2), and five days before the Newcastle speech (Tuesday, October 7) that the Premier, in consequence of the letters forwarded to him by Russell, began to waver in his conclusions. News of the battle of Antietam had reached England on the 26th of September, the day following Gladstone's acknowledgment of Palmerston's letter, in which acknowledgment allusion had also been made to the "rapid progress of the Southern arms and the extension of the [American] area of Southern feeling." There is no indication of any further exchange of letters at this juncture, or that any intimation reached Gladstone of the change of heart which Palmerston was experiencing. The methods and language of the Premier towards him both then and later were altogether courteous and conciliatory; and, so far from evincing any hard feeling because of the Newcastle indiscretion, as late as October 12 — five days after Gladstone had compromised himself and the Ministry — Palmerston wrote from Broadlands to Russell in London as follows: "It is clear that Gladstone was not far wrong in pronouncing by anticipation the national independence of the South."

The sensation following the Newcastle utterance was immediate and profound. Jefferson Davis, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had declared, had made a nation; the independence of the Confederacy was as assured as was possible for a thing to be which was in a degree still future and contingent. All the world took it to mean that the government was about to recognize the Confederacy; the market for cotton and for cotton textiles was thrown into doubt, and uncertainty still further disturbed a trade already in a condition of direst confusion. Orders were countermanded; the price of the raw material

[1] *Gladstone Papers*, Ms. I. 73.

was seriously depressed. Moreover, large interests did not now want to have the war brought to a close, and made known their objection to any change of policy. Mr. McHenry in his "Statement of Facts" says that he was "an eye-witness to this procedure," taking it upon himself to assure the English public that, whatever change of policy might be agreed upon, the South was in no position to "deluge" the European market with cotton. To the same effect, Mr. Mason, a local manufacturing magnate, assured the Lancashire men that they had been needlessly terrified "by that bugbear" of "American cotton at this moment shut up, while any mail might bring news in consequence of which four million bales would be let loose upon Manchester like a deluge." The speaker, however, at the same time took occasion pointedly to deprecate "the language which had been used by men in high position in this country with respect to the prospect of the duration of this war."

Under such circumstances, Gladstone, realizing the falseness of the position into which he had got himself, framed a form of reply, disclaiming responsibility for the various inferences drawn from his language; and this disclaimer, which, as Morley says, was couched "in phrases that justly provoked plain men to wrath," Gladstone sent to the Foreign Secretary, with a request that he would transmit it to his (Gladstone's) private secretary, to be made public use of by him as one acting under instructions. This Russell did, at the same time advising Gladstone that in the Foreign Secretary's opinion the Chancellor of the Exchequer had, in what he said at Newcastle, "gone beyond the latitude which all speakers must be allowed. Recognition," Russell added, "would seem to follow, and for that step I think the Cabinet is not prepared."[1] A similar disclaimer was sent by Gladstone to the Premier. This was prior to October 20. If anything further now passed between Palmerston and Gladstone, it has not come to light. But on the 20th Lord Palmerston did write to Lord Clarendon, who at this time acted as a sort of mutual friend or convenient political intermediary, commenting adversely on Gladstone's utterances.[2] This, however, he did without any indication of temper or of a serious taking of offence.

The utterances of the press have next to be taken into con-

[1] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, II. 80. [2] Maxwell, *Clarendon*, II. 267.

sideration, for two metropolitan papers at least — the *Times* and the *Post* — were looked upon as inspired.[1] The *Times*, in its issue of October 9, referred editorially to the Newcastle speech, but commented upon it in no unfriendly tone. An explanation of Gladstone's language was found in "the warmth of his feeling" and "his readiness of speech." The following day it again referred to the speech, treating it as equivalent to a governmental decision. A strange silence then ensued, Delane, the editor, apparently sharing in the indecision of the Premier. This continued until November 13, when the paper came out with strong editorial approval of the Cabinet's rejection of the mediation proposed. Meanwhile, the *Post*, currently supposed in well-informed London circles to be the more direct organ of the Premier, at the time of its delivery reported Gladstone's speech in full, but made no editorial comment upon it until October 13. It was then most complimentary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking with laudation of the general results of his triumphal northern tour, but refraining from reference to American affairs. In pursuing this course, it seems to have reflected what was passing in the Premier's mind; but at last, on the 21st, there appeared an editorial sharply criticising Gladstone as a minister altogether too ready to speak about Cabinet matters.[2] The letter of the same date from Palmerston to Lord Clarendon would seem to indicate that this editorial was very directly inspired. The mind of the Premier was becoming clear as to the course now proper to be pursued; but, so far as Gladstone is concerned, there are no indications of resentment.

Sir George Cornewall Lewis enters at this point upon the

[1] "It became tolerably clear to me [by October 13] that Mr. Gladstone had been expressing his individual opinions, and giving loose to his personal sympathy with the chief of the rebels, whilst his course was regarded by several of his colleagues as transcending the line of policy formerly agreed upon at the time of their dispersion for the summer. The first public indication of this took the shape of an informal notice in the *Globe*, an evening newspaper professing neutrality in our struggle, and occasionally used for that reason to express official opinions, which, not without a little sharpness towards Mr. Gladstone, drew a clear line between him and the ministry in regard to the sentiments in his speech." *Adams to Seward*, October 17, 1862. *Messages and Documents*, 1862–63, Part I, 221.

[2] The editorial reflected also on Lewis for his speech of October 4, though not in so severe terms.

stage, as the controlling Cabinet factor. What actuated Lewis does not clearly appear. In the language already quoted, Sir Spencer Walpole asserts that Palmerston sent for Sir George Cornewall Lewis, and told him that "if he [Sir George] did not reply to Mr. Gladstone, it would be necessary for him [the Premier] to do so himself." Lord Morley in his *Life* of Gladstone says that "a week after the deliverance at Newcastle, Lewis at Lord Palmerston's request, as I have heard, put things right in a speech at Hereford." The issue of the London *Daily Telegraph* of more than forty years afterwards — as late, in fact, as October 24, 1908 — contained a communication relating to what now occurred. Referring to Gladstone's Newcastle utterance, the writer, evidently well informed in a general way, speaks of it as

> a striking attempt by an individual minister to force the hand of the Cabinet by a public declaration. Four members — Sir George Lewis, Mr. Milner-Gibson, Sir George Grey, and Mr. Villiers — were vehemently opposed to any change in the policy of strict neutrality. Lord Palmerston kept his own counsel, with a view of holding the Cabinet together, but was generally supposed to sympathise with the Southern States. The ill-considered language and conduct of Mr. Gladstone caused great indignation. . . . A few days afterwards the four ministers to whom we have alluded [Sir George Lewis, Mr. Milner-Gibson, Sir George Grey, and Mr. Villiers] each received a note from Lord Palmerston, asking them to call and see him half an hour before the Cabinet Council, which had been specially convened. Two of these have described the interview to the writer of this letter. When they met, Lord Palmerston told them, to their astonishment, that he entirely agreed with them, and charged Sir George Cornewall Lewis then and there to go down to his constituents in the Radnor Boroughs and in the name of the Government practically repudiate the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Lord Palmerston added that, if this were not done, he would announce at the meeting of the Cabinet the resignation of the Government. Lewis consented. His measured and sober repudiation of Mr. Gladstone produced a great sensation.

I do not vouch for the authenticity of this statement. Evidently written from recollection of occurrences and conversations long passed, it is certainly inaccurate in many essential respects. None the less, it has significance as confirmatory of what is asserted or implied by both Walpole and Morley.

It at least shows the general prevalence of a tradition and an historic understanding in quarters otherwise well informed. The intimate correspondence of Sir George Lewis with Lord Clarendon does not reveal any allusion to such a conference, or to any such mission imposed upon Lewis. On the contrary, judging by the letters in Maxwell's *Life of Clarendon*, and by those in other collections which I have been privileged to consult, it would be distinctly inferred that, so far as Sir George Lewis was concerned, nothing of the sort described had ever taken place. Apparently, Lewis acted upon his own judgment and motion; and at a later day Lord Palmerston unquestionably intimated in a letter to Clarendon that the Hereford speech was open in some degree to the criticism which had been expressed on Gladstone's utterance at Newcastle.[1]

Assuming, therefore, that Lewis now acted in the way he did upon his own initiative, the question next naturally arises — What led him so to do? Was he, as the expression then went, a "friend of the North"? Did he sympathize with the anti-slavery feeling, and take action accordingly? Nothing appears which would lead to an assumption that such was the case. On the contrary, as Morley points out, Lewis in 1861 used language of characteristic coolness about our Civil War. "It is," he wrote, "the most singular action for the restitution of conjugal rights that the world ever heard of." And again, "The Northern States have been drifted, or rather plunged, into war without having any intelligible aim or policy. The South fight for independence; but what do the North fight for except to gratify passion or pride?"[2] Was he then actuated by an unworthy jealousy of a colleague, who had replaced him as Chancellor of the Exchequer? and did this feeling lead him to an outspoken hostile expression? This, however, was distinctly not characteristic of the man. Lewis had Character. But he and Gladstone, though the latter also had Character, were not sympathetic. Lewis was an uncommonly level-headed man; of a judicial turn of mind; calm, clear and courageous, he seems never to have hesitated to express himself, always, however, soberly and in a way indicative of thought. There could not consequently have been much close sympathy between him and Gladstone, a man influenced by fervor, and

[1] *Clarendon*, II. 267. [2] Morley, II. 84 *n.*

subject to what can best be described as moments and even periods of cerebral exaltation. Gladstone's Newcastle utterances, though at the time, as he thought, well considered, were, there can be little question, largely attributable to impulse. He sympathized deeply and acutely with the Lancashire suffering. It appealed to him. He was also fully persuaded that the North was carrying on a hopeless struggle. He so expressed himself. Lewis, on the other hand, was otherwise-minded; but both his attitude and utterances at this juncture bear marks of conviction. They are those of a public-spirited minister, weighing considerations calmly, with a view to action on grounds which would bear examination. It would seem as if he did not propose to have the government of which he was a member swayed by authority or unduly influenced by a "phalanx" of colleagues, no matter how "formidable," or to what degree reinforced. Accordingly, whether induced so to do by the Premier or acting on his own initiative, he thus, on October 14, a week after Gladstone's speech at Newcastle, expressed himself at Hereford:

> Everybody who read the accounts in the newspapers of what was doing in America could see that although there was a war between these two contending Powers, it was a war which was as yet undecided — a war which was waged on the part of the Northern States for the purpose of restoring the States to the condition of union they were in before the war began; and on the part of the Southern States a war to establish their independence. But the war must be admitted to be undecided. Under such circumstances, the time had not yet arrived when it could be asserted in accordance with the established doctrines of international law that the independence of the Southern States had been established.[1]

The matter did not end here. Only the day before Sir George Lewis expressed himself at Hereford, Earl Russell had circulated his "confidential memorandum." Three days later, October 17, Sir George sent out a counter-memorandum in reply to that of Earl Russell. The memorandum, likewise confidentially addressed to his colleagues of the Cabinet, was elaborate. In it he expressed himself even more explicitly than at Hereford. This paper has as yet never seen the light. Though important in itself, especially to American writers,

[1] The London *Post*, October 16, 1862.

and illuminative as to conditions then prevailing in Great Britain, it is too long to be given here in full. It ends, however, with the following expression:

Every friend of humanity must wish that this disastrous and sanguinary war should be brought to a speedy termination. Every person who believes that it must terminate, sooner or later, in the independence of the Southern States, must desire to see that independence recognized at an early period. Every person who sympathizes with the distress of the Lancashire operatives must wish that the ordinary trade in cotton with the Gulf States should be re-established. But, looking to the probable consequences of this philanthropic proposition, we may doubt whether the chances of evil do not preponderate over the chances of good, and whether it is not

> Better to endure the ills we have,
> Than fly to others that we know not of.

Copies of both memoranda were sent to Lord Palmerston, also to Lord Clarendon. From the former nothing, so far as is known, was elicited. The comments of the latter were, however, truly edifying. He characterized the position of Earl Russell as "idiotic" — one in which he presented

our face gratuitously to the Yankee slap we should receive. We have not yet recognized the Southern States (whose independence is a *fait accompli*, whatever may be said to the contrary), because it is not our interest to quarrel with the North; and we submit to great privations, because it is our policy to remain neutral, and not because we doubt the utter inability of the North to impose its yoke again upon the South. The French, who have no such fears about a quarrel with the North, have long since thought that the time was come for recognizing the South, and they would have done so if they had not been restrained by deference to our wishes and interests. [1]

In thus expressing himself, Clarendon did but echo the conclusion then generally accepted by those recognized as leaders of both political parties — those looking to Lord Derby for guidance and those led by Palmerston, The *Saturday Review* was a free journalistic lance, with pronounced "governing class" views. Referring to the Newcastle utterance, the *Satur-*

[1] *Clarendon*, II. 266.

day Review now voiced the prevailing belief of Court, Aristocracy, Army and Navy, no less than that of the Street as well as Parliament. "We did not," it contemptuously and characteristically said, "need a Cabinet Minister to tell us, what all who possess even the most elementary acquaintance with passing events in America have known for more than half a year, that the independence of the Southern States is an accomplished fact, nor does it become one whit more an accomplished fact by the circumstance of Mr. Gladstone's announcement."

The English situation as it then existed not only as respects Sir George Lewis but also as respects Lord Palmerston, the members of the Ministry and the members of the press, cannot, however, be fully understood without taking into account the letters signed "Historicus," at this time appearing in the columns of the *Times*. "Historicus," as was already well known, was merely the newspaper *nom de plume* of Mr. William Vernon Harcourt, subsequently distinguished in public life, but then a rising young man of thirty-five. Harcourt's relations with Sir George Lewis were of the closest character, for in November, 1859, he had married Lewis's step-daughter, who was also Lord Clarendon's niece. A man of great ability, incisive style, and masterful disposition, young Harcourt was applying himself to problems of international law. In common with every one else, deeply interested in the international aspects of the American struggle he now contributed a series of letters to the London *Times*. These at the moment attracted much public attention, and upon them his subsequent reputation was based. He unquestionably set forth in those letters the conclusions reached as a result of frequent and familiar discussion with both Sir George Lewis and Lord Clarendon. Subsequently (1863) published in pamphlet form, in the preface to the publication Harcourt makes a reference to the "great events which are rending to pieces the entrails of America, and agitating to its inmost core the mind of Europe." In the first of these communications, referring to the Hereford speech, "Historicus," speaking manifestly by authority, says: "The position insisted upon by Sir G. C. Lewis seems to have been much misunderstood by those who have criticised his doctrine. He

is supposed to have maintained that England would not be entitled to recognize the Southern Confederacy until the Federalists had previously done so. But the Secretary of War is far too accurate a thinker and speaker to have laid down any such doctrine. The rule he propounded was precisely that acted upon by Mr. Canning in the case of the South American Republics, viz., that where a doubtful and *bona fide* struggle for supremacy is still maintained by the Sovereign power, the insurgents *jam flagrante bello* cannot be said to have established a *de facto* independence." He then goes on as follows; setting forth in clear and forcible language the correct rule of international law:

As far, then, as any practical rule can be deduced from historical examples it seems to be this — When a sovereign State, from exhaustion or any other cause, has virtually and substantially abandoned the struggle for supremacy it has no right to complain if a foreign State treat the independence of its former subjects as *de facto* established; nor can it prolong its sovereignty by a mere paper assertion of right. When, on the other hand, the contest is not absolutely or permanently decided, a recognition of the inchoate independence of the insurgents by a foreign State is a hostile act towards the sovereign State which the latter is entitled to resent as a breach of neutrality and friendship. The true rule is that laid down in the old distich. Rebellion, until it has succeeded, is Treason; when it is successful, it becomes Independence. And thus the only real test of independence is final success.

He concludes as follows:

Yet if we are to mediate, it can only be by urging some plan which we approve. What is that solution of the negro question to which an English Government is prepared to affix the seal of English approbation? If the combatants settle the question for themselves, we can accept the result, whatever it may be, and however little we may approve it, without responsibility. If the matter is to be negotiated through our mediation, we must lend our moral sanction to the settlement at which we assist. There are many things which we cannot help, but there are some things with which it were wise to have nothing to do. And to this latter category I venture to think most eminently belongs the definition of that permanent line of demarcation which must, no doubt, one day separate the Slave from the Free States of America.

So far as sympathy was concerned, the feeling then entertained by Sir George Lewis and Lord Clarendon is probably not incorrectly mirrored in the following extract from a subsequent communication of "Historicus" to the *Times:*

Is there any man so sanguine as to hope that the end of this business is to be the extinction of slavery? But, if not, are we to become the virtual guarantors for its security? To my mind, in the one word "slavery" is comprehended a perpetual bar to the notion of English mediation as between the North and the South; a bar to amicable mediation, because it would be futile; to forcible intervention, because it would be immoral. Shallow and inexperienced observers may suppose that English opinion has undergone a revolution on the subject of slavery. It is true that the English public has been revolted by the insincerity and hypocrisy of Northern politicians on this question. We have seen through the cant by which political capital has been manufactured out of a great cause; but, on the true merits of the question itself, I believe the convictions of the English people to be wholly unchanged. It is my firm persuasion that there is no sentiment more deeply rooted in the conscience of the nation than the abhorrence of the principles and practice of that which is called in the South "the peculiar institution," but which in England we know by the more straightforward name of "negro slavery." If we refuse to become the dupes of Northern insincerity, we are equally determined not to make ourselves the abettors of Southern iniquity. A joint mediation, involving the settlement of this question, would practically place our honour in the hands of our copartners in the intervention. We might find ourselves placed in a position in which it would be equally difficult to advance with credit or retire with safety. Yet any administration, which should compromise the character of England in a cause for which she has encountered so many sacrifices, would make a fatal and inexcusable mistake.

The foregoing extracts from the letters of "Historicus"[1] probably set forth clearly and correctly the considerations which

[1] The letters of "Historicus" afford excellent reading even now, fifty years after their appearance in the columns of the *Times*. They foreshadow the subsequent parliamentary eminence of the writer. Throughout he evinces a mastery of his subject, an incisiveness of utterance, and a freedom in the expression of opinion distinctly refreshing. His comments, for instance, on what are known as the "standard authorities" on principles of international law, in no way lacking in clearness, will bear reproduction.

Of Hautefeuille's treatise he says: "For contempt of the existing code of

actuated Sir George Lewis and others in regard to the struggle then going on in America. They looked upon it as useless and bloody, and considered the independence of the Confederacy an accomplished fact. Only a question of time, they saw no good reason for involving Great Britain in a conflict the outcome of which was apparent and any participation in which could result only in an indefinite war-expenditure, and incidental injury to British commerce and mercantile marine impossible of forecast or estimate.

Returning now to the course of events in October and November, 1862, while, so far as is known, the Premier preserved the discreet silence incident to a strict neutrality in

international law, for intrepidity in the misrepresentation of history, for audacity of paradox, this ingenious speculator is without his equal, even in the modern license of coxcombical jurisprudence. I can concede to M. Hautefeuille everything except the title to originality. . . . I have no hesitation in saying that, of all treatises on this subject which have ever come under my notice, it is the most inaccurate and the most unreliable that is anywhere extant. I think I am not putting the case too high when I say that on any given point the presumption is that the propositions which will be found to be laid down by M. Hautefeuille are not only not the law, but are the exact reverse of the established law of nations."

Of Phillimore he next writes: "The recent work of Dr. Phillimore is a useful compilation, in which, however, amidst the heterogeneous pile of indiscriminate and undigested material, in which the good, bad, and indifferent is garnered up with laborious impartiality, an inexperienced reader is not unlikely to lose his way. It is a digest of opinions and authorities, rather than a scientific disquisition, on the topics to which they refer. When I turned over the pages of Dr. Phillimore's book, I confess it was with the confident expectation of finding the unauthorized crotchet of M. Hautefeuille either scouted with the brief contempt of which Wheaton thought it worthy, or, at least, disposed of upon the clear authorities to some of which I have referred you. But what was my astonishment — I will add my regret — to find that, so far from condemning this monstrosity, Dr. Phillimore actually approves and adopts it!"

Where a contributor to a newspaper deals with English and French authorities in this masterful manner, it is safe to assume that he would hardly evince much respect for the law enunciated by Secretary Seward. Such is the case. In another letter contributed to the *Times* "On the Affair of the *Trent*," Mr. Vernon Harcourt, as he then was, expressed himself as follows: "Mr. Seward 'trusts that he has shown that the four persons who were taken from the *Trent* by Captain Wilkes and their despatches were contraband of war.' This confidence expressed by the American Secretary of State can only be founded on the assumption that all the persons to whom his argument is addressed enjoy the same ignorance of the elements of international law with which he himself rests so abundantly satisfied. . . . The great maritime nations of England and France cannot afford to have the leading principles of international law confounded by the loose inaccuracies of Mr. Seward. They cannot suffer their trade to be embarrassed and their interests compromised by the American navy acting upon instructions of which every line is a blunder."

this conflict of Cabinet memoranda and Newcastle-Hereford clash of policies, his next step was characteristic — almost delightfully characteristic of the man and of the English political methods of the period.

The Palmerston-Russell ministry held office by a somewhat uncertain tenure through the silent acquiescence of a large element in the ranks of the Conservatives, who recognized in the Prime Minister one of themselves. The head of the firm was accepted as a species of compromise; and it was tacitly understood that, exceptional conditions and issues being allowed for, Palmerston would now remain in office as long as he lived; Russell was a different proposition. The Premier appreciated the situation, and, holding further Parliamentary reform in abeyance on the one hand, on the other he did not advocate a really aggressive foreign policy. As respects America, his sympathies were with the South; but, as to slavery, he was committed to the other side. The United States he looked upon as a species of present international nuisance and prospective danger; Democracy was an altogether evil thing. The nuisance, he wished to see abated; the evil thing was working out its natural results, so bringing itself into world-wide disrepute. And this it was doing, now! Lancashire was manifestly a temporary ill; the question of cotton supply would, if let alone, settle itself. So, wily in his ways, the Premier had recourse to the "mutual friend"; he wrote to Clarendon to sound Derby.

This Clarendon did, and the response was satisfactory.[1] Derby told Clarendon that he had been constantly urged "to go in," as he expressed it, for mediation and recognition; but had refused so to do on the ground that any action would merely irritate the North without advancing the cause of the South, or procuring a single bale of cotton. Clarendon then added that Derby, without professing an opinion, said that "the recognition of the South would be of no benefit to England unless we meant to sweep away the blockade, which would be an act of hostility towards the North." This "mutual-friend" illumination reached Palmerston some ten days after Gladstone had delivered himself of his Newcastle utterance, and nearly a week before the date assigned for the

[1] *Clarendon*, II. 267.

Cabinet meeting. Meanwhile, the news from America was of an uncertain nature, and, probably, for that reason disappointing so far as Palmerston was concerned. He had hoped for a decisive Confederate success; but the reports indicated Lee's withdrawal again into Virginia. The Confederate aggressive movement had come to an end; its clutch at Washington had failed. Altogether, it was a highly mixed situation; and the Premier was more and more besieged by doubt.

The members of the Cabinet were meanwhile reaching various individual conclusions. Indications were not lacking that the Foreign Secretary was annoyed both by Gladstone's premature utterance on the one side, and by Lewis's attitude of aggressive opposition on the other. Yet the Hereford speech and the subsequent confidential "memorandum" would, if anything, have seemed to confirm the Foreign Secretary in his advocacy of mediation. He was irritated at this pronounced inroad on his province.[1] But all idea of recognition had been dismissed. What he seems now to have aimed at was simply an altogether non-committal tender of good offices — quite a different thing! To this the original more aggressive program had been reduced.

The remaining members of the Cabinet were influenced by various considerations. As representing Canada, the Duke of Newcastle, Colonial Secretary, advocated delay. With winter impending, he evidently felt no inclination to renew the activities of the *Trent* excitement period of the previous year, including its movement of troops, supplies, etc., to Canada. There was also an element in the Cabinet, consisting, as already mentioned, of the Duke of Argyll, Mr. Milner-Gibson, Sir George Grey, and Mr. Villiers, pronouncedly in sympathy with the national government, or "the North," as the National and Union side to the struggle was always designated. As already pointed out, Mr. Milner-Gibson, in close sympathy with the Bright-Cobden political element, and, in fact, its representative in the Cabinet, not improbably constituted a convenient medium of communication for Mr. Adams' friend, Mr. W. E. Forster. Thus, as time passed, the Premier became satisfied that the majority of those composing the Cabinet, on general principles inclined strongly to sympa-

[1] *Clarendon*, II. 266.

thize with the South, were distinctly averse to any immediate change of policy. The perturbation of the cotton market, as respects both textiles and raw material has already been referred to; and now not without reason, the City was nervous. At just that time, the *Alabama* was playing havoc with the American commercial marine,[1] incidentally illustrating for the benefit of Lloyd's the inconveniences in possible wars of modern commerce-destroyers. In the event of hostilities the boot might not impossibly be found transferred to the other leg; for, on the high seas, the Americans were apt pupils. So, while as a result of a changed policy, the blockade would assuredly be broken and cotton released, this might well be brought about at the risk of losses in comparison with which that resulting from a cotton shortage was not to be considered. Rather than incur it, would it not be better, because less costly, to board indefinitely all the unemployed of Lancashire in the most expensive hotels of Manchester and Liverpool? And this view of the case Richard Cobden thus put with characteristic bluntness: "I will venture to say, that it would be cheaper to keep all the population engaged in the cotton manufacture — ay, to keep them upon turtle, champagne, and venison — than to send to America to obtain cotton by force of arms. That would involve you in a war, and six months of that war would cost more money than would be required to maintain this population comfortably for ten years." [2] Nothing in any way adequately compensating for the risks run by a change of policy was thus in sight. Moreover, so far as the ultimate issue of the American struggle was concerned, the concurrence of opinion was distinct that Gladstone had not overstated the case. The Premier, and both Clarendon and the French Emperor used respecting it the same expression — the independence of the Confederacy was "*un fait accompli.*" It was merely a question of time, involving the effusion of a certain amount of blood, chiefly Irish and German, in addition to that of the same strains which had already been so profusely and, as most thought, so needlessly, and even wantonly spilled. After all, Gladstone had voiced it not incorrectly: "We know quite

[1] *Message and Documents*, 1862-63, Part I. 206.
[2] Cobden, *Speeches*, II. 469.

well that the people of the Northern States have not yet drunk of the cup — they are still trying to hold it far from their lips — which all the rest of the world see they nevertheless must drink of." [1]

As it reached him day by day, this general do-nothing response on the part of the members of the Cabinet undoubtedly affected the mind and purpose of the Premier. Though quite ready to yield to the pressure in favor of mediation, and, later on, even of recognition, Palmerston no longer felt the confidence and buoyancy of his earlier years. Old, and conscious perhaps of being a bit weary, he in those October days of 1862 had cause to appreciate a ministerial situation concerning which he thus at a subsequent date and on another occasion wrote to Earl Russell: "As to Cabinets, if we had colleagues like those who sat in Pitt's Cabinet, or such men as those who were with Peel, you and I might have our own way on most things; but when, as is now the case, able men fill every department, such men will have opinions and hold to them." [2] Lewis certainly now held such opinions, nor was evidence lacking that he proposed to "hold to them." Palmerston thus saw no sufficient reason for action. If it involved a ministerial break, the government was not strong enough to stand a break. And later Clarendon wrote Lewis: "Your speech at Hereford was nearly as effective in checking the alarm and speculation caused by Gladstone's speech, as your memorandum was in smashing the Foreign Secretary's proposed intervention." [3]

Though the Foreign Secretary must by this time have realized that in the Cabinet there was much opposition to his

[1] "The commissioners and the principal agents of the Confederate States in England had opportunities for learning the feelings of different members of the Government, and of prominent men in both of the great parties, with a very near approach to certainty. I shall not be guilty of the indiscretion of classifying the Cabinet by name, but I may say that it was a common belief among the representatives of the Confederate States that two members [Russell and Gladstone] of the Ministry, at least, were very favorable to the South, and that still another [Palmerston] would have been disposed to give some support to certain members of the House of Commons who wished to bring in a motion for the recognition of the Government at Richmond, if he had not been impressed with the belief that the separation of the States was final, and that it would be both unnecessary and impolitic for the Government to give undue offence or encouragement to either of the combatants." Bulloch, *Secret Service*, II. 4.

[2] Ashley, II. 438.

[3] October 26. Maxwell, *Clarendon*, II. 266.

proposed change of policy, however chastened, and that the Premier was wavering even as to that irreducible minimum, Russell went ahead on the path outlined in his memorandum. The call had gone out for the Cabinet to meet on the 23d. The proposition that it was the "duty of Europe to ask both parties, in the most friendly and conciliatory terms, to agree to a suspension of arms" was to be considered. Lord Lyons was then in London, and had postponed his departure for Washington until after the proposed meeting. In constant communication both with Russell and with Palmerston, he no doubt freely expressed his views, always conservative, as to the course to be pursued; but, so far as he was concerned, no record of what then took place has been preserved, or, at least, as yet made public.

Mr. Adams, meanwhile, purposely delayed seeking an explanation. When at last, however, he did request an interview, Russell named for it the afternoon of October 23, the very day the morning of which was assigned for the momentous Cabinet meeting. The interview was interesting; to Mr. Adams intensely so. He referred to the Newcastle speech, and made no secret of the uneasiness it had caused him. In reply, Earl Russell vaguely stated that Mr. Gladstone's utterances had been much misunderstood; and he referred to subsequently written explanatory letters of his colleague, which, however, had in every way failed to explain. He added, in true diplomatic parlance, that while it was not for him to disavow anything on the part of Mr. Gladstone, he had no idea that, in saying what Mr. Gladstone had said, there was a serious intention to justify any of the inferences, drawn therefrom as to a disposition in the government to adopt a new policy. This was in itself going very far; but Russell added, the intention of the Cabinet still was to adhere to the rule of perfect neutrality, and to let the American struggle come to its natural end without the smallest attempt at interference, direct or otherwise. He could not, however, say what circumstances might occur from month to month in the future. Mr. Adams then inquired, somewhat categorically, whether he was to understand the Foreign Secretary as saying that no change of policy was now proposed. To this Earl Russell gave his assent.

It was all very curious; for, only an hour or so had passed since Earl Russell had asked those composing a part of the Cabinet to authorize a change of policy, and his colleagues, or those of them then present, had, under the lead of Sir George Cornewall Lewis, evinced a distinct disinclination to accede to the suggestion. Lord Granville was absent; but the Duke of Newcastle and Sir George Grey had joined in support of the position taken by Lewis. No formal action was taken at this gathering.[1] Palmerston was at Broadlands, and his staying there was significant. The Premier absenting himself, no action could be taken. In the aimless, informal discussion Russell and Gladstone stood alone. No Cabinet was held,[2] and consideration of the business for which those present had been specially summoned was postponed *sine die!*

Morley afterwards, in his *Gladstone*, called attention to the fact that the Foreign Secretary did not, in his conversation with Mr. Adams, after those at the meeting had dispersed, construe strict neutrality or continuance of the existing policy as excluding what diplomatists call "good offices." It was a nice distinction, and widely at variance with the program originally arranged by the two "ancient masters"; but it served to meet present exigencies. So Mr. Adams contented himself with an expression of great relief that Lord Lyons was to return to America, to which was added a hope that he would long continue there. To this the Foreign Secretary seems to have yielded a silent assent. Meanwhile, as Russell perfectly well knew, the question of abstention from interference of any character was not settled on that October 23. And, only the day following, Gladstone circulated a rejoinder to Lewis, insisting again on the duty of England, France and Russia to intervene by representing "with moral authority and force the opinion of the civilized world upon the conditions of the case."[3] At the same time Russell transmitted to the Premier at Broadlands a communication marked "Confidential" in which, referring to the memorandum of Sir George Lewis, of the 17th, he said: "The basis of any negotiation for peace is a matter to be seriously considered by the European governments. Whenever the question is

[1] Maxwell, *Clarendon*, II. 265.
[2] Maxwell, II, 265.
[3] *Gladstone Papers*, I. 113.

considered by the Cabinet I shall be prepared to state my views upon that head." [1] Nothing, therefore, was as yet concluded. A few days later, indeed, on the 7th of November, Sir George Lewis submitted a final and most elaborate paper, which, marked "Confidential," was printed for the use of the Cabinet. In it both the principles and the precedents involved were discussed in detail. A combination of brief and treatise, it is suggestive as to authorship. My own impression is that, prepared by Harcourt, it was presented as a Cabinet memorandum by Lewis — of course in his own name! [2]

Though the attitude of the Emperor was well understood, the situation was complicated by his Mexican enterprise. From this the English had withdrawn. The bearing upon it of the American conflict was, however, obvious; and, naturally, the British government felt no disposition to be made use of in furtherance of Napoleon's Latin-American projects. Up to this time, therefore, the Slidell program was in abeyance; his inducements to action had not materialised, and, moreover, the Emperor had evinced a distinct reluctance when further action had been suggested. He did not care to subject himself to a chance of further rebuff.[3] Accordingly the English ministry had received no official offer or communication from France upon this question; but the attitude of the Emperor was understood. Now, October 28, the Emperor gladdened Mr. Slidell's heart by advising him of the desire he felt to bring about, with England's aid, an American armistice, and of the active steps he was about to take to that end. He proposed to communicate on the subject with various European powers, including Great Britain. In view of advices from America, the hour seemed at last to have surely come.[4] His message looking to such action was, however, not officially presented to Russell until November 10, though he had known the general character of the proposed measure from Cowley's letter of October 31. The following day, No-

[1] Morley, *Gladstone*, II. 84.

[2] *Gladstone Papers*, II. 2–69.

[3] Walpole, II. 55.

[4] *Slidell to Mason*, October 29, 1862. For Slidell's report to Benjamin of his interview with Napoleon on October 28, see Richardson, II. 345. Rhodes (IV. 346) gives the date incorrectly as October 22, deriving it from Bigelow, *France and the Confederate Navy*, 126. The error has been a source of confusion to historical writers.

vember 11, the question of mediation was again submitted by the Foreign Secretary to the Cabinet, formally convened.

This meeting the Premier attended. It so chanced that both Gladstone and Lewis have left reports of what occurred. Gladstone wrote: "I am afraid we shall do little or nothing in the business of America. Both Lord Palmerston and Russell are *right.*" Of what occurred at an adjourned meeting held the next day, he reported: "The United States affair is ended, and not well. Lord Russell rather turned tail. He gave way without resolutely fighting out his battle. Palmerston gave to Russell's proposal a feeble and half-hearted support. . . . However, though we decline for the moment, the answer [to the French Emperor] is put upon grounds and in terms which leave the matter very open for the future."[1] Lewis's report is more specific. Addressed to Clarendon, it was given in a letter of the same date as the adjourned Cabinet meeting. He told how the Foreign Secretary had opened the meeting by stating that the French Ambassador had called on him the previous day and had read him a despatch from his government, proposing that Russia and England should join with France in a request to the two American belligerents to suspend hostilities for six months, both by sea and land. No terms of pacification were suggested, and no offer of mediation made. Russia, it appeared, had declined to be a party to this proposed joint representation, but was prepared to support it through her Minister at Washington, provided so doing would not cause irritation. For reasons which he then proceeded to give, the Foreign Secretary advised that the proposal of France should be accepted. Lewis thus goes on:

> Palmerston followed Lord John, and supported him, but did not say a great deal. His principal argument was the necessity for showing sympathy with Lancashire, and of not throwing away any chance of mitigating [the condition of affairs there existing.]
>
> The proposal was now thrown before the Cabinet, who proceeded to pick it to pieces. Everybody present threw a stone at it of greater or less size, except Gladstone, who supported it, and the Chancellor [Westbury] and Cardwell, who expressed no opinion. The principal objection was that the proposed armistice of six months by sea and land, involving a suspension of the commercial blockade, was so

[1] Morley, *Gladstone*, II. 85.

grossly unequal — so decidedly in favour of the South, that there was no chance of the North agreeing to it. After a time, Palmerston saw that the general feeling of the Cabinet was against being a party to the representation, and he capitulated. I do not think his support was very sincere: it certainly was not hearty. . . . After the Cabinet had come to a decision, and the outline of a draft had been discussed, the Chancellor uttered a few oracular sentences on the danger of refusing the French invitation, and gave a strong support to Lord John.[1]

"I think," Lewis significantly added in closing his letter, the Foreign Secretary's "principal motive was a fear of displeasing France, and that Palmerston's principal motive was a wish to seem to support *him*. There is a useful article in to-day's *Times* throwing cold water on the invitation. I take for granted that Delane was informed of the result of the Cabinet." Unquestionably, Delane had been informed; but, not without reason, did Slidell, on hearing of what had taken place, write to Mason: "Who would have believed that Earl Russell would have been the only member of the Cabinet besides Gladstone in favor of accepting the Emperor's proposition?"[2]

Thus as respects the Slidell program "the game was up," temporarily at least, and it was necessary "to take another tack." Acting as a government, the British Ministry had evinced a decided indisposition towards any change of policy involving a possible concurrence in the promotion and forwarding of the Emperor's Mexican venture. This also in direct disregard of the expressed recommendation of Premier, Foreign Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Of these three the veteran and altogether wily Premier at the moment probably looked upon the Cabinet action thus taken with entire complacency; in fact, had, to a large extent, engineered it. The officious and agressive Chancellor of the Exchequer had been forced to submit to a distinct rebuff. His position was in truth humiliating. Generally recognized as being so, it was so recognized by no one so much as himself. This was to Palmerston undoubtedly an outcome of the complication not otherwise than gratifying. Meanwhile, he, in all probability, like Gladstone, regarded the proposed action as merely

[1] Maxwell, *Clarendon*, II. 268.
[2] *Slidell to Mason*, November 28, 1862.

deferred — probably for a fortnight, perhaps for a month. But whether the postponement was for a greater or less period, the end he regarded as inevitable. The independence of the Confederacy was assured; the American Union was severed; or, as Lord Derby put it a little later on, "The restoration of the Union, as it formerly existed, is the one conclusion which is absolutely impossible." Thus, hugging themselves in this conviction of the sure occurrence of what they all most wished to see, they awaited the speedy arrival of the inevitable. Palmerston was outspoken in his belief. "As to the American War," he now characteristically wrote to Clarendon, "it has manifestly ceased to have any attainable object as far as the Northerns are concerned, except to get rid of some more thousand troublesome Irish and Germans. . . . It must be owned, however, that the Anglo-Saxon race on both sides have shown courage and endurance highly honorable to their stock."

The same belief obtained in France. The Emperor did not hesitate to express his firm conviction that the independence of the South was "*un fait accompli.*" He would have liked to shape his course accordingly. Up to this time, however, his action had been hampered by complications in Italy. Since the Summer of 1861-1862, Napoleon III had been anxious to withdraw the French garrison from Rome. He hesitated, however, in so doing because of his fear of losing the support of the clerical party in France. Count Cavour had died June 6, 1861. As a consequence thereof, a year later the Italian complications had become serious. The integrity of the Papal States was threatened. Rome, and Rome only, was to be the capital of a United Italy. Napoleon sought to arbitrate between the Pope and Victor Emmanuel. Suddenly, in July, Garibaldi had left Sicily with a body of revolutionary volunteers and openly marched on Rome. The Italian Government interfered to stop him, and the affair of Aspromonte occurred, August 27. In it Garibaldi was wounded and captured. So far as the Confederacy was concerned, to such a degree did these events complicate the situation that Slidell wrote to Mason, August 6: "Garibaldi's recent movements in Italy are exciting a good deal of alarm here and may I fear do us harm. I wish that he may be taken at sea and sent to New York." On the 20th of the same month he again

wrote, "The affairs of Italy are giving great uneasiness and with all the Emperor's desire to get rid of his English commitments he can do nothing until Garibaldi is disposed of." Finally, October 17, Slidell wrote, referring to the change of Ministry which had arisen out of these complications. "There has been the devil to pay here about the Roman question and for the time our question has been lost sight of." On this issue a change of French Ministry now took place, Drouyn de Lhuys succeeding M. Thouvenel in the Foreign Office. Slidell presently undertook to resume the negotiations initiated with M. Thouvenel, but found his successor wholly uninformed as to what had taken place.

Meanwhile, the second Mexican expedition having now started to its destination, and the Italian complications being temporarily, at least, adjusted, the Emperor, in view of what had occurred in London at the meeting in Downing Street on the 23d of October, submitted the proposition for joint action simultaneously to the Foreign Offices of St. Petersburg and London. Into its reception by the Russian Foreign Office, and the attitude there assumed in regard to it there is no occasion here to enter. The comment of the English Minister at St. Petersburg will suffice. He wrote: "I think that the proposal of M. Drouyn de Lhuys is very repugnant to the Prince [Gortchakoff] and that he would be happy to elude and defeat it in any way which would put the Russian Government in a favorable light before the Northern Federation." Such being the case, and the suggestion of a joint offer of mediation being declined by Russia, the only question now in any doubt was whether the Emperor, in view of his expanded Mexican enterprise, could be induced to proceed independently. As respects Great Britain Mr. Slidell felt no confidence. He had diagnosed the situation there not incorrectly. Nevertheless, he had to await the action of the Ministry on Napoleon's formal suggestion. This was presented with the result which has been described.

Such on November 11, 1862, was the situation of affairs in Europe as respects some form of interference in the American conflict, whether through intervention, recognition, an offer of mediation, or simply a proffer of friendly offices looking to a temporary cessation of hostilities. No action

could be agreed upon. Meanwhile at that very time (November 5), exactly seven weeks after the battle of Antietam, McClellan had been removed from the command of the Army of the Potomac. No one of recognized capacity or who commanded confidence whether at home or abroad had been found to replace him. Under these circumstances, not unjustifiably pinning their faith on the vigorous lead of Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson, Palmerston and Louis Napoleon, as well as Messrs. Mason and Slidell waited for something speedily to happen; and within the period commonly assigned therefor, something did happen! — but not what either Palmerston or the French Emperor had anticipated. At that critical juncture, and by the merest chance as to time, one of the great events of the nineteenth century took place in America. On September 22, while the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were corresponding with a view to the early recognition of the slave-holding Confederacy, the coming Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln had been announced. That African servitude was an issue in the American struggle was no longer possible of denial; and it presently became apparent that the newly assumed attitude of the national administration could not be ignored. The success of the Union cause from that time meant the freedom of the slave.